

EXTENSIONS OF REMARKS

DEMOCRATIC REFORM DEALT BLOW IN SLOVAKIA

HON. STENY H. HOYER

OF MARYLAND

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, July 16, 1997

Mr. HOYER. Mr. Speaker, I recently had the opportunity to meet with the Speaker of the Slovak National Council, Ivan Gasparovic, during his visit to Washington in early June. In fact, this was my second meeting with the chairman of Slovakia's legislature, whom I had also met in late 1994. I welcomed this opportunity to renew my contact with this important leader and am grateful to Mr. HYDE, who organized this meeting.

Unfortunately, since my meeting with Speaker Gasparovic in 1994, some of the most significant accomplishments of the post-Communist and independent Slovak state have come under threat, as sadly illustrated by two recent events.

Last November, when Slovak legislator Frantisek Gaulieder renounced his membership in the Prime Minister's party, he was also stripped of his deputy's mandate on the basis of a letter of parliamentary resignation which he says he never penned. Not to put too fine a point on the message he was being sent, a bomb went off on Mr. Gaulieder's porch a few days later. Unfortunately, Mr. Gasparovic had no real response to the concerns I expressed regarding this matter except to say that Mr. Gaulieder's case is still pending before the Slovak Constitutional Court.

Although the Slovak Constitution Court has earned international respect as one of the leading post-Communist courts in Central Europe, it, too, is sadly under siege. On May 23, the Slovak Ministry of Interior flagrantly violated orders of the court by willfully manipulating the administration of a referendum on NATO and the direct election of the president. In particular, the Ministry of Interior blocked one of four referendum questions scheduled for presentation to the Slovak voters and, in so doing, provoked a boycott of the entire referendum.

The disrespect shown by the Ministry of Interior for the constitutional court is nothing less than shocking. More to the point, the government's disregard for the rule of law—coming on the heels of the extraordinary means by which Frantisek Gaulieder was stripped of his parliamentary mandate last November—suggests an escalation in the tactics of the ruling coalition. It was not surprising that Slovakia's own Foreign Minister resigned after this fiasco, stating that he was unable to perform his job under such circumstances. Certainly, Mr. Gasparovic's reassurance that the Gaulieder case is pending before the constitutional court—the very court his Ministry of Interior had just defied—does little to reassure me that democracy is being effectively safeguarded in Slovakia.

In light of my concerns, I welcomed the opportunity to discuss these matters with four other Slovak parliamentarians at the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly in Warsaw last week: Jan Cuper, Dusan Slobodnik, Jan Carnogursky, and Peter Magvasi. I was joined in that meeting by Representatives /SLAUGHTER, DANNER, and KING.

In that meeting, I reiterated my concern regarding the Gaulieder case and the Interior Ministry's disrespect for constitutional order. In addition, I flagged concern regarding the continued exclusion of opposition members from key oversight operations, such as the State board for radio and television, the parliamentary committee which deals with security, and the National Property Fund which oversees privatization. Finally, I expressed my concern that the Ministry of Education had issued a patently anti-Semitic textbook in April. While Prime Minister Meciar has just announced that the book would be withdrawn from school use, the Ministry of Education continues to defend this text, revealing a serious streak of anti-Semitism in the current ruling coalition.

Throughout all this, the Slovak Government has continued to assert that Slovakia is interested in joining NATO. But the Slovak Government has simply failed to implement the kind of human rights and democratization reforms that would make consideration of Slovakia for NATO accession realistic at this point. And as Slovakia's human rights record diminishes, so does its prospects for integration into trans-Atlantic institutions.

Mr. Slobodnik did his best to convince me that Slovakia's record is really no worse—and, indeed, he asserted, probably much better—than the records of many other post-Communist countries in Central Europe. But the facts speak more clearly than Mr. Slobodnik's words. In short, the process of democratic reform in Slovakia has simply failed to keep pace with the reform process in other post-Communist countries in the region. The Baltic States, which were brutally occupied by the Soviets for 50 years, have made peace with the Soviet-era immigrants to their countries and have shown their strong commitment to their international human rights obligations; Romania, which had one of the most repressive regimes of the Communist era, has elected a pro-reform government that emphasizes tolerance and reconciliation in its political platform; Bulgarian voters, too, recently signaled that their future lies in the west, and not in the east.

During my meeting in Warsaw, I suggested to my Slovak colleagues that our discussion should be viewed not as a confrontation among enemies—the way such discussions might have rightly been viewed during the cold war—but as a conversation among potential partners. I believe that bringing Slovakia into the NATO family will contribute not only to Slovakia's security, but to the security of the entire NATO community. Each time I hear that Slovakia remains interested in joining NATO, I am heartened. Ultimately, I believe that if the

people of Slovakia want that goal, they will be able to implement the changes necessary to make it happen.

TRIBUTE TO AMANDA ELIZABETH GREEN

HON. BENNIE G. THOMPSON

OF MISSISSIPPI

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, July 16, 1997

Mr. THOMPSON. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize Ms. Amanda Elizabeth Green. Ms. Green is the recently elected Miss Tougaloo College for the 1997–98 school year. She is a junior with double majors in English and history with an emphasis in pre-law from Kokomo, MS.

Amanda is the daughter of Mr. Arthur Lee Green and Mrs. Debora P. Green. She is the youngest of two children. Her brother, Arthur Bernard Green, has had a tremendous impact on her life. She quotes the best advice given to her by him, "If you believe it, conceive it, then you will achieve it." While attending Tougaloo College, Amanda has participated in many student activities which include serving as president of the Tougaloo Modeling Squad, Miss Reuben V. Anderson Pre-Law Society, the NAACP, the National Political Congress of Black Women, the committee to re-elect Supreme Court Justice Fred Banks, and has served as an intern for the Mississippi State Supreme Court.

Amanda is currently the president of the Reuben V. Anderson Pre-Law Society, vice-president of the junior class, a member of the Student Activities Council, Tougaloo Ambassadors of Merit Scholars, a member of Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Inc., and a resident assistant. Amanda is a strong believer that the children are our future. Following that belief, she serves as a tutor for an after-school program at Rowan Middle School in Jackson, MS and a mentor at the Kokomo Head Start Center in Kokomo, MS. Although she is involved in several extracurricular activities, Amanda still has time to excel as a Dean List scholar at Tougaloo. She is also a member of the New Damascus M.B. Church in Kokomo and plays an active role in the community. She believes that all of her strength comes from God and acknowledges that all the glory belongs to him.

After obtaining her two bachelor of arts degrees from Tougaloo, Amanda plans to further her education at a prestigious law school where she will receive both her masters of arts and doctoral degrees. Amanda plans to one day establish a college fund in her parents name for needy students diligently seeking an education, holding true to the African adage "It takes an entire village to raise a child."

Mr. Speaker, I ask you to join me in honoring Ms. Amanda Elizabeth Green, Miss Tougaloo College 1997–98 school year.

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